

In the Claims

Please cancel claims 1, 4, 5, 6, 10, 13, 15, and 16 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter therein.

Please amend claims 2, 7, 8, and 11 as follows:

C4 2. (Amended) The device of claim 23 further comprising a means for introducing a negative pressure located in the interior of the housing.

C5 7. (Amended) The device of claim 2 wherein the means for introducing a negative pressure is comprised of an inlet and a pressure conducting chamber connected to each suction port.

C6 8. (Amended) The device of claim 23 further comprising at least one instrument port located in the dome-shaped portion of the housing.

C7 11. (Amended) The device of claim 24 wherein the openings of the plurality of suction ports are disposed in the bottom surface of the block.

Please enter new claims 23-36 as follows:

23. (New) A device for imposing a negative pressure on the surface of the heart comprising: a dome-shaped housing having a bottom surface shaped to engage the surface of the heart; a plurality of suction ports having openings disposed in the bottom surface of the housing; and a vacuum line operably connected to the suction ports.

24. (New) A device for imposing a negative pressure on the surface of the heart comprising: first and second shafts interlinked by a pivot; first and second suction port assemblies, wherein said first shaft is attached to said first suction port assembly and said second shaft is attached to said second port assembly; wherein each said suction port assembly is comprised of a block having a plurality of suction

ports disposed therein, and wherein each said block is attached to a vacuum line.

25. (New) As part of a surgical procedure on the heart, a method comprising the steps of:
accessing the surface of the heart;
providing an instrument comprising at least one peripheral surface shaped to engage a portion of the surface of the heart;
bringing said at least one peripheral surface into contact with said portion of the surface of the heart; and
applying a negative pressure through at least one opening provided in said at least one peripheral surface, thereby attaching said instrument to said portion of the surface of the heart whereby said portion of the surface of the heart becomes fixed relative to said instrument.

C? 26. (New) The method of claim 25 further comprising the step of performing a coronary artery bypass graft procedure on said heart.

27. (New) The method of claim 25, wherein said at least one peripheral surface is adapted to contact the surface of the heart on opposite sides of a target artery.

28. (New) The method of claim 25, wherein said at least one peripheral surface comprises a substantially circumferential surface.

29. (New) A device for imposing a negative pressure on the surface of the heart comprising: an annular housing having a bottom surface shaped to engage the surface of the heart; a plurality of suction ports having openings disposed in the bottom surface of the housing about the periphery; and a vacuum line operably connected to the suction ports.

30. (New) The device of claim 29 further comprising means for introducing a negative pressure located in the interior of the housing.

31. (New) The device of claim 29 further comprising at least one instrument port located in the annular housing.

32. (New) As part of a surgical procedure on the heart, a method comprising the steps of:
accessing a surface of the heart;
providing an instrument comprising first and second shafts interlinked by a pivot, wherein the first shaft is attached to a first member having at least one suction port therein, and said second shaft is attached to a second member having at least one suction port therein;
contacting the members with the surface of the heart;
applying a negative pressure to said suction ports, thereby attaching the members to the surface of the heart; and
manipulating the interlinked shafts via the pivot such that the members move with respect to one another, while each member maintains attachment to the surface of the heart.

C7
33. (New) The method of claim 32, further comprising the step of attaching the instrument to a stable support.

34. (New) The method of claim 32, further comprising the step of performing a coronary artery bypass graft procedure on the heart.

35. (New) The device of claim 8 further comprising a magnetic locking mechanism on said at least one instrument port.

36. (New) The device of claim 8 further comprising a suction-driven locking mechanism on said at least one instrument port.